

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

June 16, 2008

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Janna Zwerner (Co-chair)
REGRETS: Jini Fairley, Doug Sweet (Co-Chair), Jeff Hutter, Jason Rosenberg
STAFF: Beverly Droz, Amy Yuhasz, Kathleen Cahill
GUESTS: Shirley Farnham (Council on Aging rep.), Dan Cruz (Office of Rep. Peter Koutoujian), Harvey Epstein (Newton Housing Authority), Anthony D. Pellegrini Jr. (Nonantum Children's Assoc.), Carol Schein (Parks & Rec. Dept.)

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The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm. This meeting was chaired by Janna. We welcomed Kathleen Cahill from the Planning & Development Department who will be attending MCPD meetings. The minutes from the May meeting were not available yet.

Committee vs. Commission:

Bev read Jason's email of support for a Commission by ordinance or statute, and that it's essential to make the recommendation soon so it will be voted within a few months by the Board of Aldermen.

Lucie made a motion for Commission by statute and Rob seconded. There was brief discussion how we would choose our members and it was clear that the nomination process would need to be clarified. Janna and Bev reported that the City has 2 line items for HP fines and in 2007 they brought in a total of \$30,500 which went to general revenues. Janna said it should be and could be a lot more and that an officer could be hired with such funds to pursue it and bring in more revenues.

The motion passed for a Commission by statute with all in favor.

Water/Sewer Issues:

Barbara presented a hand-out which documented some history on the issue. In Feb. 2002, Alderman Yates first drafted legislation that created discounts for eligible seniors, which became law in 2004. In March 2005 the Mass. Law changed to allow landlords to charge tenants for water and sewer use and it contains certain provisions. In discussing the subject with Henry Korman (Chair of the Fair Housing Task Force), he encouraged Barbara to raise the issue with both the Newton Housing Partnership and MCPD. He felt a combined effort from them would succeed in getting the Aldermen to amend the City ordinance. He said the MCPD could take on this issue and find some sympathy among the Aldermen for extending the discount to tenants, since the water ordinance does authorize charges to tenants.

Barbara would like to see the ordinance changed so that people who rent have the same parity. Discounts are based on financial hardship and seniors are allowed this discount. Non-profits are exempt. For-profits like Arborpoint provide tenants with a sub-water-meter.

Jane Brown made a motion and Rosemary seconded to support Barbara's pursuit for an amendment to the ordinance to include eligible renters receiving a discount on their water bills, and **the motion passed with all in favor.**

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for June by Amy

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Comments are noted at the end of this report. Kathleen Cahill presented the report.

- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – **Work will proceed in July.** The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot and Beacon and Chestnut. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a fourth priority intersection; however that is on-hold until pending the completion of a pedestrian improvement study conducted by VHB. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is a fifth priority intersection. VHB is currently doing the design work for this intersection. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals.
- **Wellington Park Access** (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$5,411; Budget balance, \$0) – **Anticipate bench installation in June.** This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The project is complete, except for the bench installation. *[See following project.]*
- **Benches** (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$3,000; Budget balance, \$0) – **Anticipate bench installation in May.** The benches have been delivered to the City and the Parks and Recreation Department will install them along the new walkway. *(Expected Date of Completion: June 2008)*
- **Curb Cuts** (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$113,874; Budget Balance: \$68,955) – **Work on curb cuts is well underway.** We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in the 2008 construction season. Mayor's Committee members are encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. *(Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)*
- **Public Facilities and Parks Access** (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$27,975; Budget balance, \$40,075, of which \$28,882 has yet to be committed.) – **No change since last report.** The remaining portion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway beyond the brook will be completed this summer.
- **FY08 Uncommitted Funds** (Project CD0803A. Budget balance, \$61,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction, but other projects can be considered.
- **FY09 Funds** (Project CD0903A. \$123,485) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.*

The following represents discussion on the above CDBG report:

- Kathleen Cahill met with Steve Tocci and went to look at several curb cuts.
- We reviewed the Summary of Request for CNDG Access Funds, which was also emailed before the meeting. If we fund it as listed we'd have funds left for Fiscal Year 2009 curb cut work. We will discuss it following the presentations.
- Heather brought up the ADA requiring the difference of contrasting color for the raised dots and said Watertown Square is a good example; they put an overlay on it. Amy will look at several of the sites mentioned.
- Members should contact Kathleen Cahill with APS and curb cut sites that need attention.

MCPD welcomed Carol Schein (Parks & Recreation Department) who presented on several small park areas requesting funding. Anthony Pellegrini Jr. was with Carol.

COLETTI-MAGNI PARK

Located in Nonantum at Watertown and Bridge Streets, it is ½ acre and needs CDBG funds to rehabilitate the park. They will make all entrances accessible, re-ramp it at a correct slope, and replace the broken drinking fountain with an accessible one. Many residents walk and use this area and it is the only public drinking fountain around. A new ornamental fence on granite coping will be along the park perimeter. Guest Anthony Pellegrini Jr. spoke to the front perimeter of the sidewalk which will be 12 inches wider to accommodate 2 people passing. The sidewalks and curb cuts will be new, and it will have a new accessible pathway system with benches and even a solar powered trash belly. The park is maintained by volunteers. An annual War Memorial Day service is held there. The Engineering Department designed it and the total cost is \$120K. \$90K will come from the Nonantum Advisory's CDBG funds. This is in the pre-bid phase for fall 2008 construction. They are asking for \$30K to help cover the perimeter sidewalks, ramping and accessible fountain.

LOWELL PARK

It is ½ acre historic park bounded by Lowell Ave, Walnut and Watertown Streets at the northern entrance to the Newtonville Historic District. While long perceived as a rundown traffic island with no access or amenities, this park will be rehabilitated with a new walkway, benches, fountain, and landscaping. This is the #1 priority for the Newtonville Advisory Committee. Landscape Architecture Ray Dunetz was hired to design it. The area is undergoing traffic trials and it's been approved by the Board of Aldermen. The request is for \$22,750 for the historic pathway of asphalt edged with granite.

CHARLESBANK PLAYGROUND

Located in Newton Corner on Nonantum Place and between some existing buildings, it is a small but precious green space to this neighborhood north of the MA Pike. Site on a slope the park is inaccessible with no pathways. Ray Dunetz is also hired for this and has designed it with a continuous walkway with handrails that will ramp up from the sidewalk and then connect to a level area with play equipment, benches and picnic tables. The Newton Corner Advisory Group is recommending this as their priority. The estimated cost is \$300k and they are asking for \$30k for the ramped concrete walkway with metal handrail.

The Committee thanked Ms. Schein for her presentation, and Mr. Pellegrini for his input.

MCPD welcomed Harvey Epstein, Newton Housing Authority (NHA)), who presented on NORUMBEGA GARDENS.

NHA is requesting funds for the sidewalk repair at Norumbega Gardens Apartments located at Ashe and Walker Streets in Auburndale. The majority of residents are elderly and some residents require wheelchair mobility. This is a 57 unit, income eligible complex and walkways are used frequently. They have become very unstable due to the root systems of many trees causing them to crack and heave. NHA has met with Steve Tocci of Public Works for his analysis and he recommended repair to be implemented at the earliest opportunity. It was determined the most cost efficient method is to replace the 1/3 of pavement that is in upheaval. It is not a beautification project, it's about accessibility. Fifteen years ago they requested funds via CDBG and it is now time to do it again. To replace all the walkways would cost over \$150k. To replace the 1/3 areas would cost \$56,640.

Mr. Epstein showed photographs and a blueprint color coded to show the 1/3 of walkways in need of repair. It was asked if state highway funds would cover it but Amy said highway budgets have been

cut substantially. NHA is continually working on the buildings with general upkeep and repairs of boilers and accessibility issues.

The Committee thanked Mr. Epstein for his presentation.

Discussion of CDBG budget:

Amy noted that the requests just made to us totals \$139,390 including \$30k each for Charlesbank and Coletti-Magni Parks, \$22,750 for Lowell Park, and \$56,640 for Norumbega Gardens.

The unallocated CDBG funds available total \$205,872 including FY07 at \$28K, FY08 at \$54,387 and FY09 (which we are entering) at \$123,485. If we funded the projects presented, we would still have a balance of \$66,482 for FY09.

There was discussion of APS costs, including those at Beacon and Walnut Streets. We know the Walnut corridor is eventually going to be torn up. There were concerns of not having enough funds in the coming year.

Dan Cruz, Legislative Aide to Rep. Peter Koutoujian, spoke briefly in support of the Coletti-Magni Park in Nonantum.

Janna called for votes and members put forth motions for each area.

The motion to support CDBG funding of \$30K for the Charlesbank Playground passed unanimously.

The motion to support CDBG funding of \$30K for the Coletti-Magni Park passed unanimously.

The motion to support CDBG funding of \$22,750 for the Lowell Park did not pass.

The motion to support CDBG funding of \$56,640 for Norumbega Gardens passed unanimously.

It was decided to take up the rest of the budget at the July meeting.

Rob requested that we don't publicize our decisions for funding in front of quests.

OTHER BUSINESS

HP Parking Review Process

Janna suggested that we have a sub-committee to handle HP Parking and streamline the process. The sub-committee can review the HP requests when they come in, and make a site visit before the person appears before the Committee. Lucie said that when the Committee is aware of such requests, she and/or Rob do visit the site. But that is often after the person has appeared before the Committee. There was no conclusion about a process of what should be done first. Bev noted that particularly with the loss of her admin staff, she is not in a position to take on the HP Parking applications that Lowell previously handled.

Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF)

Janna reminded the group that per her previous email notice, she is no longer available to be the MCPD representative to the FHTF and so far, no member has stepped forward. Bev will continue to attend their meetings whenever possible. Additionally, MCPD was looking at co-sponsoring a 3rd workshop designed about housing and accessibility issues but at the moment, with no leadership on the matter, it is not moving forward.

Announcement & July Meeting Date

Janna announced that she is moving soon and will be gone by the July 21 meeting. She requested that the MCPD July meeting be moved to Monday, July 14. Bev said since there were few members left

at this late hour, she would email everyone to get their input and then confirm with everyone by email, or phone as needed. Members were very sorry to hear that Janna is leaving and noted appreciation for the good work she has done since joining MCPD.

HP Parking, 221 Washington Street:

At the last meeting Eric Sheff presented on behalf of his father, Dr. Michael Sheff regarding the 2 metered spaces in front of his office at 221 Washington Street in Newton Corner. Large commercial vehicles constantly park there, blocking access to the handicap vans that bring patients.

Lucie visited the site and stated that there is a hydrant near the 1st meter and no room for a ramp. The 2nd space has room for a ramp but not an adequately sized curb cut. She presented a copy of the plot plan for 221 Washington St. The building is owned by Dr. Sheff and the plot plan shows a large area that is part of the property. This entire area is covered with asphalt. She suggested that the drop off area should be on Dr Sheff's property. There is plenty of room and would be easily and safely accomplished. His entrance is near spaces in the small lot. According to AAB, there has to be a HP space closest to the doorway that is accessible. There was a long discussion about what option is best. Bev reminded members that at the last meeting we agreed that the best alternative was to request one of the front meters to be designated as a drop-off loading zone space.

Rob volunteered to call Dr. Sheff to discuss it with him and report back at the next meeting.

There was a motion to adjourn at 9:05pm.

NOTE: The next meeting has been re-scheduled for Monday, July 14 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.